



MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Sachi A. Hamai, Executive Officer-
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
Los Angeles, California 90012

At its meeting held October 30, 2007, the Board took the following action:

49-A

The following statement was entered into the record for Supervisors Yaroslavsky and Antonovich:

“Southern California has once again been ravaged by wildfires that began on October 21, 2007 in the City of Malibu and in the surrounding unincorporated area of the Santa Monica Mountains. Although the exact cause of these initial fires has yet to be officially determined, evidence is pointing toward power lines and power poles which may have fallen as a result of the high intensity Santa Ana winds. The County should carefully examine the reasons why these power poles may have failed and determine if measures can be taken by the utility company to strengthen those power lines and poles that are most susceptible to failure due to high winds, and which are located in our Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

“This hazard could be eliminated if power lines in these Zones were placed underground. However, undergrounding of power lines is extremely expensive, and funding available for this purpose is limited and restricted. For example, certain sources of funding may not be combined with other sources and utilized to accomplish undergrounding projects. These restrictions should be lifted in areas where high fire hazards exist.

“The County of Los Angeles was very fortunate in this year's firestorm in terms of buildings and lives that were spared, primarily as a result of the heroic efforts of our firefighters and support personnel. However, the best way to protect lives and avoid the devastation that these fires cause is to have effective wildland fire safety regulations in place in our building and fire codes. Several years ago, the County formed the Wildfire Safety Panel to investigate and recommend regulatory changes following the 1993 Kinneloa and Topanga/Malibu Wildfires. The comprehensive Wildfire Safety Panel recommendations were adopted into our building and fire codes in 1995. Since that time, strict regulations for new construction and major remodels that include fuel modification zones, fire-safe construction standards and better firefighting access appear to be working in the rebuilt regions of Malibu and in the new subdivisions in Santa Clarita.

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“At this time, the County should reconvene the Wildfire Safety Panel and ask that it review and report back to the Board on the effectiveness of the County’s current wildfire safety regulations, and whether those regulations should be amended in light of our most recent wildfire experience. The Panel should also review and make recommendations on potential undergrounding of power lines and poles in the County’s Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.”

Therefore, on motion of Supervisor Yaroslavsky, seconded by Supervisor Antonovich, unanimously carried (Supervisor Molina being absent), the Chief Executive Officer, Directors of Public Works and Planning, and the Fire Chief and County Counsel were instructed to convene appropriate staff, including departmental representatives who formerly served on the County’s Wildfire Safety Panel, to take the following actions:

1. Work with Southern California Edison Company to:
 - Investigate the cause of downed power lines and/or power poles that are suspected of causing the Malibu Fire and report back to the Board of Supervisors within 90 days with recommendations for measures that can be taken to strengthen those power lines and poles that are most susceptible to failure due to high winds, and which are located in our Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones; and
 - Identify possible remedies that will allow the combination of different funding sources to advance undergrounding of utility lines in high fire hazard areas; and
2. Examine the causes of structures lost in this year’s fires to determine the effectiveness of the County’s Wildfire Safety regulations and report back to the Board within 90 days on whether any improvements should be adopted to further enhance our ability to prevent and withstand the spread of wildland fires.

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Copies distributed:

Each Supervisor
Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Fire Chief
Director of Public Works
Director of Planning